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Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016

Volume XIX, Number 9 — March 1997

Արցախեան Շարժումը՝ Պատմութիւն եւ Իրաւունք

Յ. ԲԻԻՐՔՅԱՆ

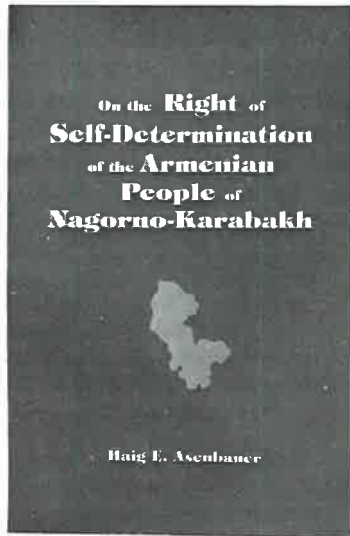
Հայկ Ազրնպատուրը, «Լ.Ղ.Ի հայ-
յութեան ինքնորոշման իրաւուն-
քին մասին», (անգլերէն, 360 էջ,
հրատարակութիւն Հայ Ազգային
Առաջնորդարանի, Նիւ Եորք, 1995)

Վերջին տարիներուն, մեր գրասե-
ղաններէն չպակասեցան Հայկական
իրականութեան այս կամ այն երե-
սք արեւմտեան աշխարհին ներկա-
յացնող հրատարակութիւններ.
անոնց մէկ կարեւոր մասը արձա-
գանգ գտաւ նաեւ «Դրօշակ»-ի
Գրադարանի այս սինակէն:

Ասոնց կարգին յատուկ յիշատա-
կութեան արժանի է վիեննարնակ
Հայկ Ազրնպատուրի գործը՝ «Լեւո-
նային Ղարաբաղի հայութեան
ինքնորոշման իրաւունքին մա-
սին», որ անգլերէն թարգմանու-
թեամբ լոյս տեսած է 1996ի սկիզբ-
ները, հրատարակուած՝ Միացեալ
Նահանգներու արեւելեան շրջանի
Ազգային Առաջնորդարանին կող-
մէ (մեկնաստութիւն էտ. Սէֆէր-
եանի): Գործին բնագիրը, գերմա-
ներէն, լոյս տեսած էր երեք տարի
առաջ Վիեննայի մէջ՝ նոյն տիտղո-
սով. իսկ անգլերէն թարգմանու-
թիւնը կը պարտինք Միք. Փա-
փազեանի:

Հայկ Ազրնպատուրի մասին՝ Հա-
տորի կողքի դ. էջը կը նշէ, որ ան
աւստրիական քաղաքացի է, Հա-
մայսարանական կազմաւորումով՝
իրաւագէտ (Վիեննայի եւ Նիւ Եոր-
քի Համալսարաններէն): Եր շեշ-
տուի, որ «միջազգային քաղաքա-
կանութեան հանդէպ իր շահագրգ-
ռութիւնը դինք առաջնորդած է
հետազոտութիւններու ու վերլու-
ծումներու՝ Լեւոնային Ղարաբաղի
ինքնորոշման իրաւունքին շուրջ,
այս վերջինի պատմական եզրե-
րուն ու յատկապէս միջազգային
օրէնսդրութեան տեսանկիւնէն»:
Ապա՝ որ գիրքը կը քննէ «ինքն-
որոշման եւ՝ օրինակեան, եւ՝ գործ-
նական երեսները, ինչպէս եւ մի-
ջազգային համայնքի պատասխա-
նատուութիւնը՝ օժանդակելու ժո-
ղովուրդի մը, որուն գոյութիւնն
իսկ վտանգուած է»:

Գործը «խորազոյն սիրով եւ վեր-
ջուշով՝ ձօնուած է (հեղինակին)
մեծ ջօր, որ երիտասարդ՝ 1918
Մայիսին (մասնակցած էր) Սար-
գայրապատի ճակատամարտին՝
նպաստելով Հայ ազգի, Հայրենիքի
եւ արժէքներու գոյատեւումին»:
Կը հետեւի յառաջարանի էջ մը՝ ստո-
րագրուած Արեւելեան Ամերիկայի
Առաջնորդ Մեսրոպ արք. Աշնա-
նի կողմէ, որ կ'ընէ անոր անգլե-
րէն թարգմանութեան եւ հրատա-
րակման պատմականը՝ խիտ հիմ-



նաւորում-արժեւորումով մը Հան-
դերձ:

Հատորը կը բաժնուի երկու մասե-
րու՝ Հաւասար ծաւայով: Առաջինը
կը կազմէ ըստ մենագրութիւնը, որ
կը բացուի հեղինակին մէկ նոյն-
քան խիտ նոթով՝ իր զրդապատ-
ճաններուն ու մեթոտին մասին (ա.
գլուխ, - Introduction and Explana-
tory Comments): Ապա, շուրջ 60
էջերու վրայ, նիւթի ակնյայտ տի-
րապետումով ու բացառիկ յատ-
կութեամբ, Ազրնպատուրը կը կա-
տարէ ամփոփումը Հայոց պատ-
մութեան՝ սկիզբէն մինչեւ մեր
օրերը՝ արցախեան շարժման նա-
խօրեակը (ը. գլուխ, - Summary of
Armenian History):

Այս ներածական, բայց կենսական
բաժինը օտտուած է քանի մը ու-
շագրու շնորհներով, սակայն թոյլ
կու տայ նաեւ մէկ-երկու անտե-
սումներ: Նախ՝ Հաւանարար առա-
ջինը ըլլալով օտարալեզու Հայա-
նիւթ հրատարակութիւններէն,
կարեւորութեամբ կը շեշտէ Հայոց
ժողովուն նոր ու առաւել հիմնաւոր
վարկածը. - Հայութեան բնիկ ժո-
ղովուրդ ըլլալը եւ հնդեւրոպացուց
նախահայրենիքի՝ Փոքր Ասիա-
իրան տարածքին վրայ գտնուիլը:
Ապա՝ պահ մը կը յամենայ ժ.Ձ.
դարէն զգալի դարձած Հայ ազգա-
յին-ազատագրական ճիգին վրայ,
ընդգծելով փաստը, որ անոր
զլխաւոր հնոցներէն էր նոյնիքն
Ղարաբաղը, հնօրեայ Արցախը.
սակայն, հոս՝ ներկայացումը աւե-
լի ամբողջական պիտի դառնար
Մեծ Հայք եւ Աղուանք պատմա-
կան-աշխարհագրական կրտա-
նութիւններուն շուրջ ճշգրտման-
բով, ինչպէս աւելի անդին՝ յղումով
մը ազգերի «պատմաշինական»
կեղծիքին: Մինչ, օսմանեան կայս-
րութեան մէջ, Հայութեան կրած
կեղեքումը եւ մանաւանդ ցեղաս-
պանական բնաջնջման ընթացքը
տրուած են ամբողջական ու խիտ
ձեւով: Նոյն որակը ունի զինազա-

(շար. էջ 2)

Board of Trustees Seminar in Philadelphia



A regional Board of Trustees seminar, the fourth in a series, took place in Philadelphia on February 8 at St. Gregory the Illuminator Church. Lectures and discussions covered a broad range of church-related topics. Spiritual unity of the church, the identity and continuity of the Armenian Church, both nationally and internationally, and local planning, leadership strategies, and communications channels were among the major topics discussed. At the conclusion of the seminar Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian touched upon various points raised during the lectures and discussions. He commended all of the participants for their excellent presentations. He concluded by emphasizing community involvement by the church. "We worry about too many little things," he said. "You need to reach out to the community, touch people who have other types of problems. Churches should have social obligations to their communities. Then we will be able to understand the verse in Matthew which says, 'When I was hungry you fed me; when I was in prison, you visited me....' We can combine faith and good works and perhaps these seminars can be mirrors on how we can fulfill the message of Christ and the Gospel."



ANEC's Festival of Schools Will Take in NJ April 13th

The Armenian National Education Com-
mittee (ANEC) has been working diligently
on what is expected to be the cultural event
of the season—the 1997 Armenian Schools
Festival which will take place on Sunday,
April 13, 1997, at the Northern Valley Regional
High School in Demarest, New Jersey.
ANEC is jointly sponsored by the Prelacy
and the Armenian Relief Society.

The event, which is under the auspices of
His Eminence, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian,
will bring together nearly 200 students from
the Mid-Atlantic regional Armenian day and
one-day schools. Participating schools are:
St. Illuminator's Day School, Woodside, NY;
Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, Bay-
side, NY; Armenian Sisters Academy,
Radnor, PA; Hovnanian Armenian School,
New Milford, NJ; Harnasdegh School, Beth-
esda, MD; Haigazian School, Philadelphia,
PA; Nareg Saturday School, Ridgefield, NJ;
Ararat School, Elberon, NJ; St. Sarkis Su-
zanne and Hovsep Hagopian Armenian
School, Douglaston, NY; Siamanto Pre-
paratory and Level One, NY.

The guest choir director for the student
chorus is Mrs. Hourig Papazian Sahagian,
former executive director of ANEC. An
accomplished musician, she is arranging the
musical portion of the festival and will
conduct the 200 students on stage.

The stage decor is being designed by
Sona Kludjian, who is being assisted by stu-

dents from the Siamanto Academy. Norik
Checkosky Babourian is stage manager and
field director and will work with the individ-
ual schools in order to achieve uniformity in
the choral renditions. The assistant stage
and choral manager is Raffi Kizirian. Mr.
Asbed Balanian has volunteered to video-
tape the entire performance.

The commemorative booklet is under
the supervision of Mary Anne Bonjuklian
and Gilda B. Kupelian, ANEC Executive
Director and the coordinator of the festival.
Bilingual press releases are being prepared
by Sirpuhi Mark, principal of St. Sarkis
Saturday School and Mrs. Kupelian.

In addition to those mentioned, festival
committee members are: John Ouligian,
ANEC Chairman; Liz Amirian, ANEC mem-
ber; Zemroukhd Markarian, St. Illum-
inator's Armenian Day School; Zarmine
Boghossian, principal, Holy Martyrs Arme-
nian Day School; Mrs. Hermine Menakian,
Nareg School Board chairwoman; Mrs. Asdghig
Inedzhyan, principal of Nareg Saturday
School; Nayiri Balanian, Armenian Sisters
Academy; Anais Tcholakian, principal of the
St. Illuminator's Saturday School; Takouhi
Bagian and Majda Garabedian from the
Haigazian School in Philadelphia and Diana
Minasian. The principals of all of the partici-
pating schools are ex-officio members of the
committee. For tickets and/or information
contact the ANEC office, 212-689-7231. ♣

From the editor...

This month we feature another thoughtful article by theologian Vigen Guroian. Vigen's articles in Outreach always stir up a great deal of emotion.

Interestingly enough those who do not agree with Professor Guroian always express their thoughts verbally. I have yet to receive a written response, in spite of the fact that I have invited several individuals to express their challenge in writing for publication in Outreach.

On the other hand, those who eagerly wait for Vigen's articles do express their thoughts in writing. I offer two such recent examples:

Father Daniel Donovan from St. Basil's Orthodox Church writes, "I received the Summer 1996 issue of Outreach today. I must say that the article entitled A Palm Sunday Meditation on the Mission of the Armenian Church by Vigen Guroian is one of the finest articles that I have ever read. Its clarity, depth and precise meaning should be observed by all of us. I sincerely hope that all readers of Outreach will take this very seriously and enrich their lives in truth and goodness. Thank you for sharing this with us."

In an eight-page letter (parts of which I will share with you in coming months), Garabed Sarkessian asks, "Is Dr. Guroian the only Orthodox Armenian theologian who publishes on a regular basis or even at all?" and then says, "I was thrilled by the article by Dr. Vigen Guroian, Becoming Real: Living the Life in Christ. This was the best thing I have ever read in Outreach. I have read all of Dr. Guroian's books and heard him speak a few times. The article is a gold mine of truth. I would like to see more articles by him."

Professor Guroian's article in this issue of Outreach, Why God sent Jonah to Nineveh: or What God Wants from the Armenian Church, will no doubt stir up more debate. The Book of Jonah is primarily known as the story of the "great fish," as the King James Version calls it, that swallows Jonah, the reluctant prophet. The real point of the story goes much deeper, and Vigen has done a superb job of making the story relevant to our lives and our church today.

Many years ago—in the 60s and 70s to be exact—my late husband and I published a little newsletter called Phoenix which always managed to create a lot of "heat." My all time favorite comment came from a woman in the mid-west who wrote, "You make me mad, but you make me think." I considered that the supreme compliment. I think we can say the same of Vigen Guroian. He might make us mad, but he sure does make us think!

Next month, as promised, we will publish the first of a series of articles on our parishes. We are beginning the series with St. Sarkis Church in Michigan, one of our largest and most dynamic parishes, because the pastor, Rev. Dr. Gorun Shrikian, recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of his ordination and we are, so to speak, "killing two birds with one stone" by covering the anniversary and focusing on the parish at the same time.

I love to hear from you. Write to me by "snail" mail, c/o The Prelacy, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016; or if you are of the E-Mail generation, you can find me on the internet, iapapazian@aol.com

OUTREACH

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Արցախեան Շարժումը Պատմութիւնն Եւ Իրաւունք

շար. էջ 1-էԸ

դարին Հետեւող շրջանի ներկայացումը. յատկապէս՝ ցայտուն զիծերով տրուած են դաշնակիցներու ապիկարութիւնը պարտեալ թուրքիոյ առջև (Մուստրոսի մէջ թուրքիոյ Հանդէպ ցուցարբերուած անընդունելի ներողամտութիւնները...), թուրքեւթորհրդային Համաձայնութեան ծալքերը, Հայաստանի Հանրապետութեան (Եւ Հ.Յ.Դ.Ի) դէպի խորհրդայինները առած նախաձեռնութիւններու անտեսումն ու ստնահարումը Ստալինի կողմէ, Սիւնիքի եւ Արցախի ճգնաժամային, անհաւասար պայքարները՝ իրենք զիրենք Հայաստանի կապուած պահելու ուղղութեամբ:

Մինչ այս երկարաշունչ ք. գլուխը կը շարունակէ նշել պատմական Հանգրուանները՝ անկախ Հայաստանի վերջին օրերը, խորհրդայնացումը, ապա անոր Հետեւող Հուսկ պայքարը՝ Ղարաբաղի շուրջ, արդէն կ'երեւի գործի իրաւագիտական թեքումը. Սիւրի դաշնագիրը, ապա Կարսի եւ Մոսկուայի դաշնագրերը, նաեւ Լոզանի դաշնագիրը՝ իրենց Հիմնական մասերով՝ կ'ենթարկուին իրաւագիտական վերլուծումի:

Երրորդ գլուխ մը, մօտ երեսուն էջերով, կ'ընդգրկէ 1987-92 Հնգամեակը: Տպաւորիչ յտնակութեամբ, Հոս կը տրուին՝ նախ՝ 80ական տարիներու վիճակը, ապա խորհրդային Փերսթրոլքայի ազդեցութեան տակ սկսած խմբումները Ստեփանակերտէն մինչեւ Երեւան. յետոյ՝ յաջորդաբար 1988ի Փետրուար-Մարտի զարգացումները, Մոսկուայի Հրձիգ «միջնորդութիւնները», Վոլսքիի «յատուկ վարչութեան» փուլը եւ Հետեւող Հանգրուանները, որոնք պիտի յանգէին կանոնաւոր պատերազմի վիճակին: Այս վերջին փուլը, եւ առհասարակ «գետնի վրայ» ընթացող իրադարձութիւններու ներկայացումը, սուսուած են աշխատասիրութեան տարապայման խտութեան պատճառով. Ի շահ յատկապէս քաղաքական-դիւանագիտական երեսին: Արդէն, բանի այդ ներկայացումը կանգ կ'առնէ գերմաններէն բնագրի Հրատարակութեան թուականէն (1993) բաւական մը առաջ, գրեթէ ոչինչ կը տրուի 1991էն սկսեալ զարգացող պատերազմական գործողութիւններու մասին:

Չորրորդ եւ Հինգերորդ գլուխները, նախորդէն աւելի ծաւալուն, կը կրեն երկին բուն միջուկը կամ պատգամը, բնորոշ թեքումը. կը վերաբերին ինքնորոշման իրաւունքին (նախ՝ ընդհանրական, ապա՝ յատուկ կիրարկումով Արցախի ժողովուրդին): Ինքնորոշման իրաւունքը Հոն կը բնութիւն յաջորդաբար ըստ իր բնոյթին, ապա՝ իր առընչութիւններով ժողովրդավարութեան, մարդկային իրաւունքներու եւ «Հայրենիքի իրաւունք»ին Հետ: Երկրորդ մօտեցումով մը (կիրառական) կը շեշտուին Օրէնք եւ Ուժ յղացքներու յարաբերութիւնները. ապա՝ խորհրդային ժամանակաշրջանի ծիրին մէջ՝ կը քննուին խորհրդային Միութեան ազգայնապետական կազմակերպութիւնը, միջազգային օրէնքի խորհրդային ընկալումն ու քննուող Հարցի Հիմնաւորումը անով, եւ գաղափարախօսութիւն-սահմանադրականութիւն կապերը: Վերջապէս, յետ-խորհրդային տարիներու Հայտին, կը կատարուին շարք մը քննութիւններ. Լեւոնյան Ղարաբաղի ժողովուրդի ինքնորոշման իրաւունքի օրինական Հիմք, իրաւունքի իրականացում, իրաւատիրոջ սահմանում, պետութեանց Հողային անձեռնմխելիութիւն. ապա եւ Հայաստանի կայացումը՝ իբր

Sourp Khatch Church Sponsors Seminar



Participants in the recent seminar for young adults, the first in a series co-sponsored by the Armenian Religious Education Council and the religious education council of Sourp Khatch Church, Bethesda, Maryland, gather for a group photo.

"What Do We Believe?" was the theme of a seminar geared for young adults at Sourp Khatch Armenian Church in Bethesda, Maryland, on Saturday, February 22. The seminar, the first in a series, was sponsored by the Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC) and the Sourp Khatch Religious Education Council. The purpose of this seminar was to provide the participants with a better understanding of our basic beliefs as Armenian Christians, as well as to enrich the participants' spiritual journey during this Lenten season. Approximately 40 people participated. The seminar began with a prayer by Rev. Fr. Khoren Habeshian, the Pastor of Sourp Khatch Church.

The seminar was led by the Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, Vicar General of the Prelacy and Pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Douglaston, New York. Hayr Anoushavan used the Nicene Creed, "Havadamk," as the foundation for his presentation. The Havadamk, formulated at the First Ecumenical Council held in 325 A.D. in Nicea, is the Church's expression of her faith and the confession held in common by all Christians.

During the question and answer session, echoing the verses from Psalm 23, Hayr Anoushavan explained that the Bible provides the best image of the Armenian Spirit, better than any historical text. "Even though

I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." As Armenians, said Hayr Sourp, we have been persecuted throughout our history, yet we continue to survive as a Christian nation.

The participants were treated to a delicious Lenten luncheon prepared by Mrs. Sylvie Avakian, Mrs. Margaret Dardarian, Yeretzgin Berjouhi Habeshian, and Mrs. Aghavni Miranian.

Deacon Shant Kazanjian, director of ANEC presented a second seminar, "Opening to the Transcendent: Foundations of Armenian Christian Spirituality," on Saturday, March 15, drawing upon the rich tradition of the Armenian Church to explore ways to develop one's personal relationship with God and methods for creating space in our daily lives.

Future seminar topics will include, "Ethical Challenges of the Day and Explanation of the Sourp Badarak." These and other seminar topics were identified based on a survey done by the Sourp Khatch Religious Education Committee. In addition to these seminars, the Sourp Khatch Church is also conducting a monthly adult Christian educational program, led by Rev. Fr. Khoren Habeshian. For information, call the Church office at 301-229-8742. ❖

պաշտպան կողմ:

Մաւալուն մատենագիտական ցանկ մը կը փակէ գործին մարմինը կազմող այս ամբողջութիւնը:

Կը Հետեւի յաւելումներու ծաւալուն բաժին մը՝ փաստօրէն Հատորին Բ. կէսը:

Առաջին յաւելումը կը բաղկանայ քարտէսներէ, թիւով՝ տասներեք: Երկրորդը՝ աւելի ընդարձակ, կը խմբէ փաստաթուղթեր, դաշնագրային բնագիրներ եւ այլն, Փարիզի խաղաղութեան դաշնագրէն (1856) մինչեւ Մինսկի Համաձայնագիրը եւ Ալմա-Աթայի յայտարարութիւնը (1991՝ Երկուքն ալ), անցնելով Սան Ստեֆանոյի դաշնագրէն, Կիպրոսի (թուրքեւանգրլիական) Համաձայնագիրէն, Պերլիի դաշնագրէն, Սեւրի եւ Հայոց նորագոյն պատմութիւնը կէտայգրող այլ կարեւոր փաստաթուղթերէ: Շահեկան ժողովածու՝ ինքնին, թէեւ խմբուած նիւթերու մեծ մասը կապ չունի բուն Հարցին Հետ: Արժէքաւոր այս Հրատարակութիւնը անպայման պիտի շահէր, եթէ անգլերէն թարգմանութեան առիթը օգտագործուէր դարձանալու յրացնելու Համար ժամանակագրական ընդգրկման վերոնշեալ սահմանափակութիւնը՝ փաստօրէն մինչեւ 1991, ու 1992էն՝ Հապճեակ ակնարկով մը միայն: Իր ծիրը Հասցնելով 1994ի զինադուլի Հանգրուանին, աւելի կարեւորութեամբ տալով նաեւ 1992-93 տարիներու Հերոսական խոյանքները, քննորոշման իրաւունքի»

նուիրուած այս գործը դուրս պիտի չիցնար իր առաջադրանքներու հիմնական սահմանումէն, բանի, ինչպէս Հետեւող գլուխին մէջ աշխատասիրողը արգարօրէն շեշտած է. «Ինքնորոշման իրաւունքի իրականացումը ուժի Հարց է»:

Այդպիսի ընդլայնում, ի Հարկին, կրնա կատարուիլ Հատորի մասերու վերանայումով մը, օրինակ՝ ի Հեճուկա յաւելումներու մէջ մասին - ա՛յն փաստաթուղթերուն, դաշնագրային բնագիրներուն եւ այլն, այլապէս կարեւոր, սակայն որոնք, ինչպէս կ'ըսուէր աւելի վեր, ուղղակի առնչութիւն չունին նիւթին Հետ: Եւ ոչ. յամենայն դէպս, ի վնաս ներածական բաժիններուն՝ Հայոց պատմութեան փուլերը ամփոփող, որոնք նպատակայարմարօրէն կը ստեղծեն Արցախեան Հիմնահարցին պատմական-իրական շրջանակը:

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On the Right of Self-Determination of the Armenian People of Nagorno-Karabakh by Haig E. Asenbauer is available at the Prelacy Bookstore 355 pages, soft cover, \$24.95 plus \$4.00 shipping & handling

Why God Sent Jonah to Nineveh: Or "What God Wants from the Armenian Church"

by Vigen Guroian

Given as a lecture at the forum "What Will Be the Future of the Armenian Church in America"
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 28, 1996

Then he [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Luke 24:45-47

Most of us are acquainted with the Old Testament story of Jonah in one way or another. The fable element of the story when Jonah is swallowed and then spit out by a great fish has been the inspiration of many literary works. We need only think of Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* and Carlo Collodi's fairy tale *Pinocchio*.

The Church has attributed an important symbolism to this incident. It has been interpreted as a sign or type of Jesus' baptism and resurrection from the dead. But the theological meaning of the story and its bearing on faith are even more broad. The Book of Jonah is a masterfully written satire that unmasks false beliefs and calls Israel back to its calling to be Holy and witness to God's mighty works of redemption. That is why the ancient compilers of the Hebrew canon placed Jonah among the prophetic books of scripture. I believe this ancient biblical story can help us to understand why we and our own Church are failing to meet our calling in Jesus Christ, and can show us the way toward greater faithfulness to God. Just as the ancient author of the Book of Jonah sought to awaken Israel spiritually, I hope that my discussion today might contribute to a renewal in the Armenian Church.

We know relatively little about the origin of the Book of Jonah other than its principal character may be identified with a prophet mentioned in II Kings who was a counselor to King Jeroboam II. That character would have lived in the eighth century B.C. But most authorities agree that the Book of Jonah was written at least three centuries later in the wake of Israel's return to Palestine from its long captivity in Babylon. This would put its composition somewhere in the fifth or perhaps fourth century when Jews were struggling to adjust to their return to the land and to Jerusalem. How were they to make sense of their long diaspora and return to the homeland? What was God's role in all of this and what was Israel's appropriate response to its new circumstance under the divinely proffered covenant that had long ago formed them into a special people of God?

While the story's historical context is a vital element for an understanding of its meaning, we should not think of it as history in the same sense as I and II Samuel or I and II Kings. Rather, we should approach it as a parable or perhaps an

allegory, and in that way a prophetic message concerning spiritual truth. The story begins: "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai" (Jonah 1:1). Amittai is derived from *ameth*, the Hebrew word for truth. Jonah means dove, and in the Bible the dove is often a symbol for Israel. So we have a possible rendering: Dove (or Israel) son of Truth. Relying heavily on irony, the author of the Book of Jonah satirizes post-exilic Judaism and in that way attempts to call Israel back to its right mind and mission.

We quickly learn that Jonah is a reluctant prophet. His reluctance could be attributed to the radical nature of God's request. After all, God tells him to go and to bring divine judgment to a people that is an enemy of Israel, the Assyrian city of Nineveh to the east. It was dangerous enough to be a prophet in one's own land, but to go to another people and prophecy judgment in the name of a foreign deity, that might well have seemed unreasonable to Jonah.

"I believe this ancient biblical story can help us to understand why we and our own Church are failing to meet our calling in Jesus Christ, and can show us the way toward greater faithfulness to God."

In any case Jonah chooses to board "a ship at the port of Joppa... to flee to Tarshish... to escape the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). But things go not so easily for Jonah because God has other plans for him. The ship that Jonah boards sails into a terrible storm and the seas rage endangering everyone aboard. The crew members, who are not Jews, nevertheless own a strong native piety and immediately suspect that this is a divinely initiated punishment. They cast lots and decide that Jonah might be at the root of the trouble. The captain seeks him out. But Jonah has "gone down into the hold of the ship, and [has] lain down and is fast asleep" (Jonah 1:5). Once again, Jonah has fled from God and his responsibilities. But the captain finds him and bring him up to face the crew. Jonah admits his blame. But what is more surprising, he begs the sailors to throw him overboard to save themselves. To their credit the crew are reluctant to do so, looking for other means short of sending a man to his death. Finally, however, they see no other course than to do as Jonah has requested. But Jonah's death wish is frustrated by God who sends a large fish which swallows him up. And there in the belly of the fish Jonah remains for three days and three nights, after which the fish spits the reluctant prophet out onto dry land.

Here ends the first section of this tale in two parts. Throughout this first section of the story Jonah is depicted as fleeing from the Lord, whether boarding a ship to go in the opposite direction from which God instructs him to go, hiding in the hold of that ship to escape the storm, or begging to be thrown into the sea. Now inside the belly of the fish, Jonah offers an unexpect-

ed prayer of thanksgiving to God for rescuing him.

I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol cried, and you heard my voice; You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas...

Then I said, "I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look upon your temple?"... yet you brought up my life from the Pit.

(Jonah 2:1-6)

This thanks for being saved seems odd since Jonah is still trapped inside of the fish. Thus, some interpreters have concluded that the prayer is a misplaced fragment of Hebrew psalmody. But an alternative reading is possible: Jonah in the belly of the fish symbolizes Israel during the Babylonian captivity when vast numbers of Jews accommodated themselves to the syncretistic religion of their conquerors, in effect abandoning the God of Israel for comfort and safety. In this case Jonah's prayer can be taken at face value. He is indeed glad to be inside of the

belly of the fish and would even welcome death rather than obey God's command. Jonah's prayer mocks unintentionally the biblical psalms of lamentation and thanksgiving. Jonah's ignorance of God's final intentions what makes his speech and actions ironic. For God intends to rescue Jonah from the belly of the fish in order to try him once again with his mission to the Ninevites.

One last point about Jonah's prayer. Nowhere in the prayer is there a note of remorse or repentance for not following God's wishes. This is a significant omission because the genre of the biblical psalm that Jonah's prayer mimics always includes such a component. So could the ancient writer have wanted the reader to contrast Jonah's (i.e., Israel's) failure to repent with the unexpected repentance of the Ninevites in the second part of the story?

Jonah finds his way back to Jerusalem, Mount Zion and the Temple. Presumably, he feels safe once more, but he is not safe from the reach of God. Once more God instructs Jonah to "get up" and go to Nineveh; this time with the explicit instructions to tell the Ninevites that if they do not repent and turn to the true God, in forty days they and their city will be utterly destroyed. And this time Jonah does what he is told. Once again a symbolic three days is recorded as the time it takes Jonah to get from one end of Nineveh to another. In ancient Jewish belief this is how long it takes a dead soul to reach Sheol, the under region of darkness and death. Jonah travels like a dead man through Nineveh crying out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4).

Amazingly, the Ninevites take to heart

the words of the reluctant prophet. All of the denizens of the city, even the sheep and cattle, wear sack cloth and repent. God is true to his word. He relents and does not bring the threatened destruction upon Nineveh. But Jonah is outraged at God's mercy toward the Ninevites, a non-Israelite people known for their long history of iniquity. Jonah demands justice from God and that means vengeance and retribution. Indeed Jonah would rather die than live in a world where God fails to act in the way he, Jonah, thinks God ought to act. He asks God to take his life from him. But God refuses, answering, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4).

For some reason, perhaps misunderstanding the meaning of God's ambiguous reply, or perhaps still driven by anger, Jonah does not give up hope that the promised destruction will be wreaked upon Nineveh. He goes out into the desert to wait for the divine judgment. A gourd vine grows on an arbor and keeps him shaded. But then the vine is attacked by a worm and withers up. Still waiting for divine justice to be rendered but disappointed and discomfited by the severe heat and wind, Jonah once again says to God, "It is better for me to die than to live." But God questions Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush." Jonah then says, "Yes, enough to die." (Jonah 4:9). The story ends with God having the last word.

Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in night and perished in night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred twenty thousand persons... and also many animals?"

(Jonah 4:10-11)

This is such a rich story and my purpose in bringing it before you today will not do justice to all of its wisdom and artistic perfection. But permit me to venture some parting observations. Interpreters differ about the core meaning of the story. Some think it is preeminently about the mission of Israel and argue that that mission includes the extension of God's mercy to the non-Israelite nations. In this case, the story reflects a growing tension between Jewish particularism and the theological universalism that was advocated by some elements within Judaism at that time and by the later prophets. Others, with at least as much justification, say that the story reflects a more internal debate among Jews over the nature of God's justice and mercy and the role that repentance might play in the recovery of Jewish religious life.

I see no reason to choose immediately between these two competing interpretations. Each lends insight into the nature of faith. If the Book of Jonah is about the struggle between particularism and universalism within later biblical and intertestamental Judaism, then we have something important to learn and consider about the present tension within Armenian life between Armenian particularism and nationalism and Christian universalism. If the story reflects more of an inter-

(Continued on page 4)

Why God Sent Jonah to Nineveh

(continued from page 3)

nal Israelite debate over the power of repentance to heal the wounds of past oppression and overcome attraction to false gods, then we have something important to consider about the obdurate pride of Armenians, their insistence upon earthly justice and holding God accountable and their resistance to look for the blame within themselves for the moribund state of their Church and the dreadful moral decline of the ethos of the nation.

It is commonly accepted that the connections the protagonist of this story may have with a real historical figure or figures, define him as a Jewish nationalist. Such Jewish particularism and exclusivism was driven by a sense of justice that is punitive and refuses mercy towards Israel's enemies. The author of the Book of Jonah suggests also that this nationalism had a secret death wish. It was better to bring oneself or the entire nation to ruin than accept anything short of complete vindication for Israel.

I have had it said to me that my criticisms of Armenian nationalism are unfair, that it is not the beast that I describe. Certainly, not every form and expression of nationalism is a bad thing. But the Armenian case is cause for concern. Perhaps only from the stance of biblical faith is it possible to see and appreciate fully the danger to life that this nationalism poses in the contemporary Armenian world and the enemy that it is of the Church. Armenian nationalism is the fish that has swallowed the Church and is restricting its mission to the confines of the nationalist agenda. The Armenian Church is in its own Babylonian captivity and is embracing Babylon's false gods of language, blood and race, while denying till it is blue in the face that it is doing any such thing. Rather than be a mission to the world and preaching the Good News to the four corners of the earth, we, like Jonah, prefer the familiar security of the temple and historic sacred places to the freedom and risk of mission. How often have you heard this refrain in our communities?: "After all, our Armenian Christianity is unique and is besieged on all sides. It really ought not to be shared with others lest we corrupt it. Armenians who have suffered so much have earned the right to be for themselves and themselves alone, lest they perish. Survival is the highest sacred value, even higher than God."

But I ask you, "Why is it so hard for us to admit that, in fact, the temples we seek to preserve have become the mausoleums of a dead faith and the sacred places have become not much more than tourist attractions of lifeless antiquities. Why can't we see that an idolatry of race and nation, and our submission of the Church to obeisance to these false gods makes these things inevitable. Most interpreters of the Book of Jonah agree that its criticism was directed against the Zakodite priesthood of Israel that was coming to power at the time. These religious leaders regarded the Temple of Jerusalem as the only legitimate shrine of Jewish religions. Preservationism and restorationism were triumphing over the call to mission. This traditionalism, which in many ways was a quite predictable response to the recovery of Jerusalem as a center of Jewish existence, ironically was drying up the wellsprings of faith among the people.

A great theologian of this century has left us these important thoughts about the Church and mission. Emil Brunner wrote: "The Church exists for mission, just as fire exists for burning. When there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith." Jonah spent his obligatory three

days issuing the word of God in Nineveh. Then he went outside of the city and made himself a booth, a tent style tabernacle—no doubt because he preferred to be in the Temple in Jerusalem. Jonah sat "in the shade [of that booth], waiting to see what would become of the city" (Jonah 4:5); that is, until God made the vine that covered the bare wooden structure wither and die, and Jonah became unbearably uncomfortable. Is there a message in this for us?

"In the larger picture, on the world scene, our Church has the resources and is in the unique situation to be a bridge builder between the Eastern and Western churches and lead in a new ecumenism for the future."

As for the second interpretation that the Book of Jonah belongs to an internal debate within Judaism over the need for repentance among Jews themselves, let me just say the following. John the Baptist built his ministry upon repentance for salvation sake. And for this message, he was imprisoned and finally gave his life. St. Mark reports that "after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God," and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the Good News." The Good News that Christ preached was not about the founding of a new independent Jewish kingdom, although ultimately even his disciples seemed to want or expect that to be the case. So even they abandoned their leader to die alone on a cross.

Will we also flee from the cross rather than repent for having failed Christ. Will we continue to keep the Gospel shut up in stone and mortar rather than feed it to our children and offer it to our neighbors. What need is there to repent, you say? What excuse is there not to repent? But to repent one already must have a share in the humility of Christ and believe in Him. Right now a debate over the need for repentance in Armenian religious life hardly even exists, which raises the question of whether the true faith is within us at all. Certainly, vast numbers of Armenians daily consume the mixed cup of false pride and self doubt, anger at God and self-hatred, glorification of the Armenian people and vilification of its enemies that is offered to them by the priests of Armenian nationalism in the churches and outside of them.

This is a poison not a remedy! When did we begin to prefer it to the blood of the Lamb? When did we forget how to repent and like Jonah start to resent others to whom God has shown mercy and given his peace? I have come to the conclusion that addressing this incapacity to repent, this unwillingness, this lack of seeing any need to repent is our most urgent task.

We begin by confessing our own personal sins and from there we will start to discern the sickness in the body to which we all belong. We repent and forgive one another and build peace in our relations with each other. Then God will enable us to become reconcilers and peacemakers in the world. Then we will see unity in the Church in America. There will be no way of stopping its coming about. In the larger picture, on the world scene, our Church

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When these things come to pass, I feel sure we will begin to discover meaning even in the violent uprooting and massive dispersion of Armenian life in this century and finally be at peace with the memory of the nation's great suffering. When these

things come to pass, I am confident that we will see possibilities for the new Armenia that transcend anything being imagined by today's political and religious leaders. When the Church leads in repentance, then the people will sigh a great sigh of relief, for in that act the permission will be granted, the opportunity will be presented, for expression of creative energies long frustrated by pent up guilt and anger. We must believe what Christ said, that if we repent and believe in Him even the very gates of the Kingdom of God will open up to us. ❀